

CLAIMS

I (we) claim:

- 1 1. In a public computer network connecting a buyer
2 organization and two or more supplier computers each having a browser,
3 wherein the supplier computers are coupled to a set of one or more server
4 computers associated with the buyer organization over the public computer
5 network, a method comprising:
6 at least one server computer in the set of server computers,
7 receiving a request to schedule a reverse auction based on an identified item to
8 procure, wherein the reverse auction is to be conducted a selected number of
9 days in the future;
10 determining by the buyer organization whether to add additional
11 requests for the identified item, based on the scheduled auction;
12 creating an electronic qualification plan to qualify the identified
13 item;
14 approximately concurrently with creating a qualification plan,
15 identifying suppliers to participate in the reverse auction, including suppliers
16 associated with the two supplier computers;
17 approximately concurrently with identifying suppliers, creating an
18 electronic request for quotations ("RFQ") with respect to the identified item;
19 creating a draft electronic purchase order for the identified item
20 before conducting the reverse auction;
21 at least one server computer in the set of server computers,
22 electronically distributing the electronic RFQ to the at least two supplier
23 computers over the public computer network;

24 conducting the reverse auction and identifying a winning supplier
25 from the identified suppliers;
26 transitioning from an existing supplier to the winning supplier;
27 and
28 at least one server computer in the set of server computers,
29 providing the draft electronic purchase order to the winning supplier to at least
30 procure a number of the identified items for executing the created qualification
31 plan.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the public computer
1 network is the World Wide Web, wherein the browser is a web browser, and
3 wherein receiving a request to schedule a reverse auction
4 comprises receiving input, from an electronic purchasing leader, to a web page
5 electronic auction form;
6 wherein determining whether to add additional requests for the
7 identified item comprises automatically providing to a global commodity leader
8 an electronic copy of the web page auction form, and determining whether
9 suppliers in identified low cost geographic regions may participate;
10 wherein conducting the reverse auction comprises, at an auction
11 server computer in the set of server computers, electronically providing results
12 of the reverse auction at an expiration of an auction duration;
13 wherein providing the draft electronic purchase order to the
14 winning supplier comprises creating an electronic purchase order at a
15 purchasing system server computer in the set of server computers; and
16 wherein the method further comprises, approximately
17 concurrently with creating an electronic RFQ, electronically scheduling the
18 reverse auction with an electronic auction support group.

3. A system for facilitating item procurement from one of two
1 or more suppliers, the system comprising:
3 at least one server computer coupled to a database, wherein the
4 server computer is configured to:
5 receive a date when an auction is to be conducted, wherein
6 the auction is for an item to be procured from one of the plurality
7 suppliers, wherein the date is a selected number of days in the future and
8 is stored in the database;
9 before the date of the auction, provide at least a portion of
10 an electronic qualification plan to qualify the item to be procured,
11 wherein at least the portion of the electronic qualification plan is stored
12 in the database;
13 assist in the conducting the auction and obtaining winning
14 bid from a winning supplier selected from the two or more suppliers; and
15 assist in procuring at least a number of the identified items
16 from the winning supplier for executing the created qualification plan
17 before a greater number of the identified items are procured from the
18 winning supplier.

4. The system of claim 3 wherein assisting in conducting the
1 auction comprises assisting in conducting an electronic reverse auction between
2 a buyer computer associated with a buyer organization and supplier computers
3 associated with the two or more suppliers, wherein a public computer network
4 couples the buyer and supplier computers and the server computer; and
6 wherein the server computer is further configured to provide at
7 least a portion of an electronic request for quotations ("RFQ") with respect to
8 the item to be procured, and distribute the electronic RFQ to the two or more
9 supplier computers over the public computer network.

5. The system of claim 3 wherein the server computer is
1 further configured to provide at least a portion of an electronic request for
2 quotations ("RFQ") with respect to the item to be procured, and distribute the
3 electronic RFQ to the two or more suppliers.

6. The system of claim 3 wherein the server computer is
1 further configured to provide notification to at least one member of a
2 qualification team after the winning supplier is identified.

7. The system of claim 3 wherein assisting in conducting the
1 auction comprises assisting in conducting an electronic reverse auction with
2 supplier computers associated with the two or more suppliers, wherein the
3 supplier computers are coupled to the server computer via the Internet.

8. A method of procuring items by a buyer organization from
1 one of two or more suppliers, the method comprising:
3 identifying an item to procure from one of the two or more
4 suppliers under an auction, wherein the auction is to be conducted a selected
5 number of days in the future;
6 before conducting the auction, creating an electronic qualification
7 plan to qualify the identified item;
8 conducting the auction and identifying a winning supplier from
9 the two or more suppliers; and
10 procuring at least a number of the identified item from the
11 winning supplier for executing the created qualification plan before procuring a
12 greater number of the identified items from the winning supplier.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein conducting the auction
1 includes conducting an electronic reverse auction between a buyer computer

3 associated with the buyer organization and supplier computers associated with
4 the two or more suppliers, wherein the buyer and supplier computers are
5 coupled to a public computer network; and

6 wherein the method further comprises creating an electronic
7 request for quotations ("RFQ") with respect to the identified item, and
8 distributing the electronic RFQ to the two or more supplier computers over the
9 public computer network.

10. A computer system comprising components configured to
1 perform the method of claim 8.

11. A computer-readable generated data signal transmitted via
1 a transmission channel, the generated data signal encoding contents that cause a
2 computer to perform the method of claim 8.

12. The method of claim 8, further comprising: notifying at
1 least one member of a qualification team after the winning supplier is identified.

13. The method of claim 8, further comprising:
2 creating a request for quotations ("RFQ") with respect to the
3 identified item and distributing the RFQ to the at least two suppliers.

14. The method of claim 8, further comprising:
2 creating a draft purchase order before conducting the auction.

15. A method of procuring items by a buyer organization from
1 one of two or more supplier organizations, the method comprising the steps of:
3 identifying an item to procure from one of the two or more
4 supplier organizations under an auction;

5 creating an electronic qualification plan to qualify the identified
6 item;

7 approximately concurrently with creating a qualification plan,
8 identifying supplier organizations from the two or more supplier organizations
9 to participate in the auction;

10 approximately concurrently with identifying supplier
11 organizations, creating a request for quotations ("RFQ") with respect to the
12 identified item;

13 distributing the RFQ to the identified supplier organizations; and
14 conducting the auction and identifying a winning supplier
15 organization from the identified supplier organizations.

16. The method of claim 15, further comprising:
2 creating a draft purchase order before conducting the auction.

17. The method of claim 15 wherein conducting the auction
1 includes conducting an electronic reverse auction between a buyer computer
2 associated with the buyer organization and supplier computers associated with
3 the two or more supplier organizations, wherein the buyer and supplier
4 computers are coupled to a public computer network; and
5 wherein creating an RFQ comprises creating an electronic request
6 for quotations with respect to the identified item and distributing the electronic
7 RFQ to the two or more supplier computers over the public computer network.
8

18. A computer-readable medium storing computer-executable
1 instructions, the instructions being capable of causing a computer to perform the
2 method of claim 15.

19. The method of claim 15 wherein identifying supplier
1 organizations includes identifying a set of potential supplier organizations from

3 a larger set of supplier organizations, and approving at least some of the set of
4 identified supplier organizations.

20. The method of claim 15 wherein creating an RFQ includes
1 electronically distributing the RFQ for approval before distributing the RFQ.

21. A data signal encoding computer-executable instructions,
1 the instructions defining a method of facilitating item procurement from one of
2 two or more suppliers, the method comprising:

4 providing at least a portion of an electronic qualification plan to
5 qualify an item to be procured under an auction;

6 receiving a set of supplier names identifying suppliers to
7 participate in the auction, wherein the set of supplier names is selected from the
8 two or more suppliers; and

9 providing at least a portion of a request for quotations ("RFQ")
10 with respect to the identified item, and wherein providing at least a portion of
11 the RFQ is performed approximately concurrently with providing at least a
12 portion of an electronic qualification plan or receiving a set of supplier names.

22. The data signal encoding computer-executable instructions
1 of claim 21, further comprising:

3 creating a purchase order before conducting the auction.

23. The data signal encoding computer-executable instructions
1 of claim 21, further comprising:

3 distributing the RFQ to the set of suppliers; and

4 conducting the auction and identifying a winning supplier from
5 the set of suppliers.

24. A computer-readable medium storing the data signal of
1 claim 21.

25. The data signal encoding computer-executable instructions
1 of claim 21 wherein providing at least a portion of an electronic qualification
2 plan includes receiving an initial number of the identified item to procure for
3 testing.

26. The data signal encoding computer-executable instructions
1 of claim 21, further comprising:
3 electronically distributing the RFQ for approval before conducting
4 the auction; and
5 electronically distributing the set of suppliers for approval before
6 conducting the auction.

27. A method of procuring items from one of two or more
1 supplier organizations, the method comprising:
3 creating a request for quotations ("RFQ") with respect to an item
4 to procure from one of the two or more supplier organizations, wherein the item
5 has been procured from an existing supplier organization;
6 identifying a set of supplier organizations selected from the two or
7 more supplier organizations, wherein the set of supplier organizations are to
8 participate in the auction;
9 distributing the RFQ to the set of identified supplier
10 organizations;
11 conducting the auction and identifying a winning supplier
12 organization from the set of identified supplier organizations; and
13 if the winning supplier organization is not the existing supplier
14 organization, then transitioning from the existing supplier organization to the

15 winning supplier organization, wherein the transitioning includes: procuring any
16 existing numbers of the identified item the existing supplier organization has on
17 hand; automatically generating an electronic message for at least the existing
18 supplier regarding at least one reason why the winning supplier won the
19 auction; or, procuring a number of the identified item from the existing supplier
20 organization to permit uninterrupted transitioning to the winning supplier
21 organization under an automated procurement system ("MRP system").

28. A computer-readable, medium storing instructions causing
1 a computer to assist in procuring items by a buyer organization from one of two
2 or more supplier organizations, comprising:

4 receiving a request to schedule an auction based on an identified
5 item to purchase, wherein the auction is to be conducted a selected number of
6 days in the future;

7 determining by the buyer organization whether to add additional
8 requests for the identified item, based on the scheduled auction and based on
9 additional need for the identified item within the business organization;

10 creating a request for quotations ("RFQ") with respect to an item
11 to procure from one of the two or more supplier organizations;

12 identifying a set of supplier organizations from the two or more
13 supplier organizations to participate in the auction;

14 distributing the RFQ to the identified set of supplier
15 organizations; and

16 conducting the auction and identifying a winning supplier
17 organization from the identified set of supplier organizations.

29. The computer-readable medium of claim 28 wherein the
1 computer-readable medium is a logical node in a computer network receiving
2 the instructions.

30. The computer-readable medium of claim 28 wherein the
1 computer-readable medium is a computer-readable disk.

31. The computer-readable medium of claim 28, further
1 comprising receiving an at least partially prepared purchase order before
2 conducting the auction.

32. The computer-readable medium of claim 28 wherein
1 creating the RFQ and identifying a set of supplier organizations are performed
2 substantially concurrently.

33. The computer-readable medium of claim 28, further
1 comprising, before conducting the auction, creating a qualification plan to
2 qualify the identified item.

34. A system to assist in procuring items for a business
1 organization from one of two or more suppliers, comprising:
3 means for receiving a request to schedule an auction based on an
4 identified item to purchase and an identified quantity, wherein the auction is to
5 be conducted a selected number of days in the future; and
6 means for determining whether to increase the identified quantity
7 for the item based on the scheduled auction and based on additional need for the
8 identified item within the business organization.

35. The system of claim 34, further comprising:
2 means for creating a request for quotations ("RFQ") with respect
3 to the item to procure from one of the two or more suppliers;
4 means for identifying a select number of suppliers from the two or
5 more suppliers to participate in the auction;

6 means for distributing the RFQ to the identified suppliers; and
7 means for conducting the auction and identifying a winning
8 supplier from the identified suppliers.

36. The system of claim 34, further comprising:
2 means for creating a qualification plan to qualify the identified
3 item before conducting the auction.

37. The system of claim 34, further comprising:
2 means for creating a request for quotations ("RFQ") with respect
3 to the item to procure from one of the two or more suppliers; and
4 means for identifying a select number of suppliers from the two or
5 more suppliers to participate in the auction, wherein the means for creating the
6 RFQ and means for identifying supplier operate approximately concurrently.